

Anantasayana Shrine..Coronation Memorial

--MyNaa Swamy, Historian

Sri Krishna Deva Raya the Great of Vijayanagara Empire, during his reign (1509-1529), got constructed hundreds of temples and also developed many more. To mark his victory over Udayagiri Fort, he built a shrine for Lord Krishna at Hampi. And to celebrate his victorious march to the eastern kingdoms, he developed Vittala temple. As per the request of his mother, Nagalamba, he got beautifully reconstructed Vedanarayana Swamy shrine at Nagalapuram in Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh. To celebrate the coronation of his six-year-old son, Tirumala Deva Raya, he got constructed Anantasayana temple at Hospet. He got etched beautifully on a black stone the idol of Maha Vishnu in sleeping posture but could not get installed in the temple. A big size Sanctum Sanctorum was built and decorated for the big idol. Perhaps nowhere can we see such a huge Sanctum Sanctorum, which has three gates. The tower on it appears different from those in other temples. It resembles the base of Aadiseshu. The images in Mahamandapa are very nice. Adjacent to this shrine is the temple of Goddess-Lakshmi. There is a mandapa especially for festivals. Anantasayana temple has all the requirements that a shrine needs. It has an important role in the life of Krishna Raya, but for some reason it does not attract many devotees. Thousands of visitors almost daily come to Hampi-capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. But they have little knowledge about Ananta temple. As a matter of fact, Hampi trip cannot be called complete without visiting this shrine. So, those who plan a trip to UNESCO's World Heritage Site-Hampi, must visit Anantasayana temple, located 1.6 km from Hospet.



According to one estimate there are about 300 temples in and around Hampi in Karnataka. Among these the most important ones are the Viroopaksha Swamy Sannidhi, Vittala, Krishna, Hajaararama temples and Anantasayana shrine. These were very dear to the heart of Krishna Raya. The Hajaararama temple was built exclusively for the members of the royal family. An ardent devotee of Mahavishnu, Krishna Raya thought of building a temple for Ananthapadmanabha Swamy at Hampi. Before that, he constructed a new village, Nagalapuram, in the name of his mother-Nagalamba. Another town got established very near Hampi. This is Hospet. In Kannada it used to be called Hosapattana-Hosapete (New Town) and then Nagalapuram became Hospet. The king got constructed a temple for Ananthapadmanabha Swamy in the year 1524 AD. To coincide with the coronation of the King's son-Tirumala Deva Raya, Anantasayana temple took shape at Hospet.

Vijayanagara ruler Sri Krishna Deva Raya had two Queens, Tirumala Devi and Chinnama Devi, and both had a daughter each. Tirumala Devi's daughter was Tirumalamba, and Vengamamba was Chinnama Devi's daughter. Raya the Great defeated Gajapathi rulers and took over the forts of Udayagiri, Kondaveedu, Kondapalli and those up to Katakam and merged them in his Empire during the years 1515-1516. He took as his third wife the daughter of Prataparudra Gajapathi. Her name was Annapurna Devi. On the occasion of the birth of a son, the king gifted the land at Kumbharakunte near Hampi-Kamalapuram. The inscription at Kumbharakunte mentions that some land there had been donated to the Anjanagiri (Tirumala) Tiruvengalanatha temple. The ninth line in the inscription is as follows "Pattamahadevi Tirumala Devi Amma navaru, Tirumala Raya Mahaa Rayarige Punyavaaga". It is dated October 30, 1518 (Saalivaahana Sakavarsham 1440 Bahudhaanya Samvatsaram Kaarthheeka maasam Bahula Dwaadasi Sanivaaram). There are three inscriptions at Gorantla in Anantapuram district of Andhra Pradesh mentioning Tirumala Deva Raya as the ruler. Two of these inscriptions are on the walls of the northern gate of Someswara sannidhi. Both were written on the same day, one by the side of the other. Details about the repairs to the temple tower on Sanctum Sanctorum, construction of the corridor etc., are given in these inscriptions. It is written in Telugu as "Sriman Mahaaraajaadhiraaja Rajaparameswara Sri Veerapratapa Tirumala Deva Rayalu pruthvee raajyam cheyuchundaga (Tirumala Deva Raya is ruling Vijayanagara empire)". It was got written by Suraparaju, an employee of Vaakiti Aadeppa Nayaka and is dated August 14, 1524 (Saalivaahana Sakavarsham 1446 Taarana naama Samvatsaram Adhika Bhadrapada maasam Suddha 15 Aadivaaram). A similar inscription is there near the opposite gate of Someswara shrine.

One more inscription of Gorantla Madhava Raya temple is describing Tirumala Deva Raya was the King of Kings. The inscription is on the left side wall of mandapa of Madhava Raya temple's main entrance. It is in Telugu and describes Tirumala as the Raajaadhiraaju. It is mentioned in the inscription that Vaakiti Aadeppa Nayaka donated land (which is under cultivation near Raavikunta Tank) to Madhava Raya Swamy temple to meet its Puja, Prasadam and other expenses, and this was done in the name of Aadeppa Nayaka's father-Ramarasu. This inscription is dated November 7, 1524 (Saalivaahan Sakavarsham 1446 Taarana naama Samvatsaram Kaarthheeka Suddha 12 Somavaaram). Mahamandapa here was got constructed by Krishna Raya in the year 1524 to commemorate the coronation of Tirumala. The inscriptions here are in Telugu, Kannada and Sanskrit. No other inscription, except those at Gorantla, has mentioned Tirumala Deva Raya as the ruler of Vijayanagara empire.

After the coronation of his son-Tirumala as the king, Monarch Krishna Deva Raya ordered that the event should be celebrated throughout the Empire for one year as great festival. He also announced many gifts and donations. To mark the event the temple of Anantasayana was got constructed and the area around the shrine was named Tirumala Raya mahapuram.

Design of the Temple: Anantasayana temple was built on a vast area, before the entrance one finds the temple tower, in an incomplete state. Though the foundation was strong, it had been subjected to some destruction. The huge doors represent the Vijayanagara style of sculpting. The triangle shaped images are very attractive. The Sanctum Sanctorum, Ardhamandapa, Mahamandapa, Utsava Mandapa, a well nearby and adjacent to is a shrine of Mother Goddess. On Mahamandapa's left side pillar is the image of Krishna Deva Raya. One gets the impression as if the king himself is welcoming the devotees to the temple. On the pillar at the rear is the image of Tirumala Deva Raya. With a row of eight pillars, the Mahamandapa has a wealth of sculptures, most of them relating to Vaishnavism. There is also an image of Vaishnava Saint Ramanujacharya. A few steps beyond are Ardhamandapa.



Sanctum Sanctorum of Sri Anantapadmanabha Swamy is very spacious, which we do not come across in any other shrine. Its height is about 80 feet. The artistic skill of the sculptors of those times is visible in the temple tower, which has a height of about 35 feet. According to the 1922 annual report of the Archeological Department, the idol of Goddess Lakshmi Devi with four hands was there in the past. Few reports say that... Anantasayana shrine was destroyed by 5 Sultans army. They also set fire to the Sanctum Sanctorum and destroyed the outer protecting wall. Infront of Mahamanmdapa there is a four-pillared small mandapa, which has an idol of Aanjaneya Swamy (Monkey God). The lamp pillar near it is very attractive.

Where is the Idol?: The idol of Sri Padmanabha Swamy is not there in the shrine. The Sanctum Sanctorum appears empty. The Archeological department has stated in a report that, from the time the temple was built in 1524 and up to 1549, pujas were conducted there. The story relating to the idol is quite interesting. The temple builder, Krishna Raya, had ordered that a beautiful idol of Maha Vishnu, sleeping on Seshatalpam (Big snake), be sculpted with black stone. And the artists carried out his orders. The idol had to be brought from a long distance. The sculptors prayed to the Lord to help them carry the idol to Hampi without any hitch. The Lord is said to have put a condition that while carrying the idol they should not look backwards. After travelling some distance, one person is said to have looked backwards. From then on, the idol did not move forward. This incident happened at Holalu village of Hadagali taluk in Bellary district. And the idol of Sri PadmanabhaSwamy remained at Holalu. This episode has been mentioned by a British officer named Francis in the 1904 Bellary Gazetteer. It is also referred in the Archaeological Department booklet on Hampi. As a matter of fact, the idol is being worshipped in the Ranganatha Swamy temple at Holalu.

Then where is the idol that was being worshipped in the Anantasayana temple? This is because there is evidence that pujas were being conducted in the temple till the year 1549. In the

Kamalapuram Museum there is an idol of Anantapadmanabha Swamy, sculpted on white stone. It could be that this was the idol that was being offered worship.



The Inscription: There is a big inscription on the left side wall of the Anantasayana temple Mahamandapa. It is written in Sanskrit, and it says Sri Krishna Deva Raya got the temple constructed in the year 1524 to mark the coronation of his son-Tirumala Deva Raya. The area around the shrine was named Tirumala Raya mahapuram. Some lands at Sandur in Bellary district were gifted to the temple. The king also ordered how the pujas had to be conducted. To mark the coronation, celebrations were ordered to be organised throughout the Empire for eight months. But even before they came to a close, Tirumala died. The coronation was in April 1524 and the death took place in December- the same year. The last inscription under the name of Tirumala Deva Raya was the one at Chengalpattu in Tamil Nadu and it is dated December 11, 1524. There were no inscriptions under his name after that. A trip to the Anantasayana temple will convey to the visitor the strong Vishnu devotion of Krishna Deva Raya and his ardent love for his son-Tirumala.

(MyNaa Swamy acted as interpreter to Sri Narendra Modi,Prime Minister of India during his visit to Lepakshi Veerabhadra Temple in Andhra Pradesh on 16th January 2024)

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